

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated September 11, 2008. Claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 13 to 15, 17, 18 and 22 are pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 18 and 22 are in independent form. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 7, 18 and 22 were objected to because of informalities. The Claims have been amended as suggested in the Office Action. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 13 to 15, 17, 18 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, for alleged failure to comply with the written description requirement. Specifically, at page 3, the Office Action alleges that “superimposing the enlarged partial image of the candidate image onto the displayed candidate image” is not supported by the Specification. Applicant respectfully disagrees. Figure 23A shows a displayed candidate image 2301, and Figure 25C shows enlarged partial images of the candidate image superimposed onto the displayed candidate image. Accordingly, withdrawal of the § 112 rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 18 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,182,069 (Niblack) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,392,658 (Oura). Claims 13 to 15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Niblack in view of Oura and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,612,715 (Karaki). Claim 17 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Niblack in view of Oura and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,356,908 (Brown). Although the claims have been amended, the rejections are respectfully traversed, as follows.

The present invention, as defined by Claims 1, 18 and 22, involves using an image search apparatus to search for images. A plurality of images is stored. Partial images included in the respective stored images are stored in correspondence with the respective stored images. Features of the stored partial images are stored in correspondence with the respective stored partial images. A feature of a target image to be used as a search condition to search for the target image is received. The image including a partial image which contains the received feature is searched for as a candidate image. The candidate image is displayed, the partial image corresponding to the search condition is enlarged, and the enlarged partial image, of the candidate image, is displayed onto the displayed candidate image.

By virtue of enlarging the partial image corresponding to the search condition, the partial image is emphasized for the user, who is therefore able to grasp it more readily.

Applicant submits that the applied references, alone or in any permissible combination, are not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the notion of enlarging a partial image that corresponds to a search condition, and superimposing the enlarged partial image onto the displayed candidate image.

Niblack is seen to disclose generating queries by dragging and dropping thumbnail images from an image characteristics window to an image query construction window. Based on definitions and information associated with the thumbnails in the image query construction window, a query is constructed for searching stored image data. The image characteristic values included in the query are compared against the values for the

corresponding image characteristics contained in the stored image data, and stored image data corresponding to the query is displayed in a Query Result window.

Specifically, as shown in Figure 5 of Niblack, thumbnails 96 to 98 are arranged in the image characteristics windows 91 to 94 at a predetermined position in the example image window 90 by drag and drop. In Figure 5, the thumbnail “Bears” is arranged on the left, the texture “WATER” is arranged on the upper right of the example image window 90, and this arrangement is set to the query. The query is generated based on the definitions and information associated with each thumbnail arranged on the example image window 90 and the arrangement position of each thumbnail.

However, Niblack is believed to be silent on enlarging a partial image that corresponds to a search condition, and superimposing the enlarged partial image onto the displayed candidate image.

In fact, in the Niblack arrangement, there is no need for any type of emphasis on the search condition, by enlargement or in any other way. Therefore, Niblack is believed to be silent on emphasizing a partial image corresponding to a search condition, much less, emphasis by enlargement.

Indeed, page 5 of the Office Action concedes that Niblack “does not expressly recite search result display means for displaying candidate image, enlarging the partial image that contains the feature, and superimposing the enlarged partial image, of the candidate image, on to the displayed candidate image”. However, the Office Action alleges that Oura discloses the claimed “display means”. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Oura is seen to disclose a panorama picture synthesis apparatus that synthesizes a panorama picture from a plurality of picture data. A whole preview and a

partial preview of the synthesized picture are displayed simultaneously, so that a user can easily confirm whether joined portions are correctly synthesized while observing the whole picture of the result of the synthesis.

As shown in Figure 6 of Oura, the uppermost region displays the whole picture, and the middle region displays a partial picture. A part of the whole picture is framed, and the framed region is enlarged and displayed as a partial picture. There is a scroll bar immediately under the partial picture. The partial picture can be moved by means of the scroll bar, with the result that the frame in the whole picture can be moved accordingly. In an initial state, the frame indicating a partial picture is located at the leftmost portion of the whole picture, and the partial picture display region displays the framed leftmost portion of the whole picture. Thus, Oura is believed to disclose a user using a scroll bar to designate a region of a whole picture that is to be enlarged.

On the other hand, the present invention involves searching for an image using a search condition. As a result of performing the search, a candidate image is displayed. The candidate image includes partial images, and a partial image corresponding to the search condition is enlarged and displayed, in superimposition onto the displayed candidate image.

In contrast, Oura is merely believed to disclose a user manually designating a region of a displayed synthesized image, and enlarging the designated region. Enlargement is thus performed based on user interaction. In contrast, the claims specify that a partial image is enlarged since it corresponds to a search condition.

Moreover, the claims specify that the enlarged partial image is superimposed onto a displayed candidate image. By contrast, even to the extent that Oura

displays an enlargement, the enlargement is displayed side-by-side, and not in superimposition onto any other image.

Oura is thus believed to be silent on enlarging a partial image that corresponds to the search condition, and superimposing the enlarged partial image onto the displayed candidate image.

Karaki and Brown have been studied, but they are not seen to teach anything that, when combined with Niblack and Oura, would overcome the deficiencies of Niblack and Oura as described above.

Therefore, the applied references, alone or in any permissible combination, are not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the notion of searching for a candidate image using a search condition, displaying the candidate image, which includes partial images, enlarging a partial image that corresponds to the search condition, and superimposing the enlarged partial image onto the displayed candidate image.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, independent Claims 1, 18 and 22, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are believed to recite subject matter that would not have been obvious from the applied art, and are therefore believed to be in condition for allowance.